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ABSTRACT

The Lohrville Career Education Model (LCEM) was instituted as a systematic attempt at exploring careers in Iowa and inducing Iowa youth to seek careers closer to home following high school graduation or post-secondary education training; a major purpose of the Toward Community Growth project was to teach positive attitudes about living and working in rural areas. The LCEM consisted of seven units to be taught in two 2-week sessions during fall and spring semesters. Students were taught with specific post-test attitudinal responses in mind. Between class sessions, a 2-week career education work experience session placed senior students with local resource personnel whose work corresponded to the students' tested and self-identified occupational interests. A major contention of this study was that attitudes of urban, city-based pseudo superiority could be reversed with an intense, attitudinal program designed specifically for rural students, and that a state mandated inception of career education programs into all K-12 systems could and should provide a re-emergence of positive feeling and attitudes toward rural lifestyles, rural occupations, and a future career in a rural area. It was suggested that urban students should receive the same educational opportunity with rural-based models of career education and future agrarian-based occupational lifestyles. (CM)

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Career Development in Rural Education

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On June 19, 1978 the Lohrville Community Schools of Lohrville, Iowa received the following correspondence from 6th District Congressman, Berkely Bedell:

> Dear Dr. Baskerville,
> I am happy to tell you that I received the enclosed grant notification from the Office of Education, HEW. The grant ... is given to demonstrate the most effective methods and techniques in career education.
>
> With best wishes for continued success, I remain,
>
> Sincerely yours,
> BERKLEY BEDELL
> Member of Congress

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1979-80 completed the second year of operation for the Lohrville Career Education Model (LCEM) and the Toward Community Growth project. The Model was originally developed for rural Iowa high schools in order that they might experience career opportunities in their local areas. Iowa's recent demographic history had strongly indicated that young adults were leaving the rural areas once their kindergarten through twelfth grade (K-12) education had been completed. There was even evidence available which indicated that Iowa's population growth as a whole was lagging behind that of other middle-western states in the recently finished decade of the 70's. The LCEM, therefore, became a systematic attempt at exploring careers in Iowa, and at inducing Iowa's youth to seek careers closer to home following graduation from high school or the completing of additional post-secondary education/training. It was assumed that this would benefit not only the rural areas of this predominantly rural state, but the so-called 'urban' population centers as well.

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The experimental program model included a course syllabus to be taught in two 2-week sessions during the fall and spring semesters. It consisted of the following seven units: 1) "Specific Local Emphases;" 2) "Rural Living and Rural Lifestyles: A Psychological Approach;" 3) "Rural Economy and Rural Finance;" 4) "Rural: "A Gestalt Approach;" 5) "Individual Attitudes and Personalities in a Rural Community;" 6) "Careers: City vs. Rural;" and, 7) "The Generation Gap." Each of the seven units was taught in accordance with specific attitudinal questions asked in the pretest attitudinal survey. (The pretest and posttest surveys utilized the same instrument.) The pretest survey included 59 questions from which respondents were asked to provide an attitudinal response of varying degrees: Strongly disagree, disagree, undecided, agree, and strongly agree. The attitudinal survey provided 29 general career education statements which called for an attitudinal response; the remaining 30 statements were directly connected with the objectives to be taught in the seven units of the previously cited syllabus. In other words, students in the experimental group were taught with specific posttest attitudinal responses in mind.

Sandwiched in between each semester's 2-week class sessions was a 2-week career education work session experience in the local K-12 school district or in contiguous districts. Senior students were placed with district resource personnel in accordance with the results obtained from the Kuder Occupational Interest Survey and the self-identified rank ordering of occupational interests as provided by individual students in the Lohrville experimental group. Both the Kuder OIS and the self-identified rank ordering of career work preferences, as provided by students, were analyzed for similarities in occupational interests. When similar or corresponding work interests were found in both the Kuder and the self-identified list, students were counseled as to the

availablity of the preferred work in the immediate area. Local resource personnel were then contacted and asked if they could provide a 2-week, daily career education experience for the student or students whose Kuder OIS results and self-identified list of preferred occupational interests corresponded to that of the Lohrville School District's resource individual(s). All Lohrville Senior Students in the Toward Community Growth experimental group were placed with resource personnel in either the local K-12 school district or contiguous districts. Each of the students was given a career education experience with a person or persons whose work corresponded to the students' tested and self-identified occupational interests. One major premise of the Toward Community Growth project was that students could be taught positive attitudes about living and working in rural areas.

Since 1978 Lohrville senior students have been required to take a class in 'rural' in conjunction with their local career education experiences. The class was based on the assumption that attitudes can be taught and learned. Developments in recent years have shown that minority group studies, Native American and Afro-American to cite two, have produced positive attitudes within these specific minority groups concerning heritage, customs and the inherent values within their respective minority lifestyles. (This assumption has been gathered from empiricized data and can be defended, logically, through observation and happenings of the 1960s and 1970s.)

By comparison, rural Iowans and rural Americans are also a minority. There are fewer inhabitants in rural areas than exist in suburban, urban and metropolitan regions. For decades rural students have been taught with and by urban education models. Rural students were told, consciously or unconsciously, that if they were intelligent, capable individuals they should 'get out' of the rural regions and into the cities where they could have a bright future

and 'amount to something.' This, coupled with fewer agricultural and agri-business opportunities due to the increasing size of 'family farms,' produced an invaluable 'brain drain' of great magnitude and proportions in rural areas.

It was a major contention of this study that these attitudes of urban, city-based pseudo superiority could be reversed with an intense, attitudinal program designed specifically for rural students. The state mandated inception of career education programs into all K-12 systems could and should provide a re-emergence of positive feeling and attitudes toward rural lifestyles, rural occupations, and a future career in a rural area. Toward Community Growth emphasized the positive attributes of 'rural' as a way of life, and hopefully made one small dent in the countless years rural students have been propagandized with the benefits of an urban lifestyle. There is still much to be accomplished, however, if 'rural choices' are to be brought up to the level of 'urban choices' in rural Iowa/America. This dream also includes the ruralization of urban students in the not too distant future if true educational opportunity is to exist throughout Iowa's K-12 school systems. Urban students must also be shown the benefits of a small school, small community way of life. Needless to say, this all too important aspect of socialization and community interaction is missing from the multi-faceted curricula of urban districts. True equality of educational opportunity involves much more than counting the number of programs offered district wide; it also becomes a very important aspect of individuality, the freedom of choice to determine future lifestyles, and the exposure to career alternatives, rural as well as urban. Rural students have been continuously exposed to urban models and lifestyles for years. It now becomes imperative that urban students receive the same educational opportunity with rural-based models of career education and future agrarian-based occupational lifestyles.

The reversal of urban attitudes concerning rural schools and rural communities is a difficult task. Major mediums of news conveyance and editorialization are more often than not based in heavily populated, urban areas. It becomes easier for urban sources to relay the faults of rural areas since urbanites have the major media voice at their disposal. Rural people, inherently, do not have the same major voice of news/opinion/editorialization. Who, then, has the upper hand in formulating attitudes among all people, both rural and urban. People believe what they read; they believe what they hear. If rural citizens have lived with the constant media reminder that small is bad, inefficient, uneconomical, resource poor, and, through inference, incomparable to urban-based models of all shapes and sizes, including education, then rural people, through no fault of their own, will start to believe what they read; and what they hear. Magnify and multiply urban produced and induced attitudinal 'mind-sets' of several decades and generations, and those who are self-professed proponents of 'rural' as a way of credible viable, and often-times superior lifestyles, do indeed face a monumental task in reversing well-established, urban based attitudes.

June 19, 1978 did mark the beginning of a new era for the Lohrville Community School District. This rural, K-12 educational system had gained not only national recognition for an academic innovation, but more importantly the opportunity to produce a program of local, state and national significance for <u>all</u> rural school districts was now a distinct possibility. That's all Lohrville wanted; an opportunity. An opportunity to pragmatically demonstrate to the State Legislature that Iowa is rural-rooted in her rich heritage; that the motto, "Iowa - A Place to Grow," is not just intended for the so-called urban-based population centers within the State. An opportunity to prove to Iowa lawmakers that rural growth and rural community rejuvenation are possible with legislative encouragement; not only financially, but attitudinally as

well. The opportunity to demonstrate that rural citizens, possessors of a culture and educational philosophy inherent in agrarian-based peoples, are indeed intelligent human beings, worthy of being listened to, and believed, in the greatest agricultural state in the nation. And, of equal importance, the opportunity to 'prove' statistically and empirically to the Iowa Department of Public Instruction, (DPI), that rural schools within rural communities are not merely so many pawns to be moved, merged, eliminated, vacuumized, or reorganized at the whim and fancy of a Des Moines-based education power structure. Suffice it to say, as microscopic as they might seem, those opportunities are not affordable. They exist for those school districts and communities who wish to 'work' at survival.

Ironically, the summary for the essence and intended nature of the Toward Community Growth study was found in the February 11, 1979 edition of the Des Moines Sunday Register. For his Iowa Boy column Register Staff Writer Chuck Offenburger visited Aurelia, a northwest Iowa community of 1,065 proud citizens, to interview Doug Lockin, "an extraordinary senior" at the local High School. This community-proclaimed, "All American Boy," unknowingly but articulately documented the need for a rural career education model in his following statement,

> ...I've grown up in this town. I have very strong feelings for Aurelia. I always said that I'd never leave here, but I see now I have to, at least to get an education. After that, if there's a good chance for me to come back here, set up some kind of business and live, I probably will.

Wouldn't it be nice if attitudes such as the one exhibited by Doug Lockin could not only be encouraged, but given definite direction and purpose within the parameters of a rural career education model designed specifically for a rural state? Many, many youthful Iowans want to "come back here, set up some kind of business and live." Toward Community Growth and "Lessons in 'Rural'" are one step in the direction of fulfilling that attitudinal desire, and in lending credibility to the State Motto, Iowa - A Place to Grow.